

## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

DELAWARE DEPARTMENT of Transportation proposes to rebuild the Wagamons Pond dam and its associated bridge on Mulberry Street in Milton, Broadkill Hundred, Sussex County. The 57-acre pond was created in 1815 and is currently maintained by the Delaware Division of Fish and Wildlife for recreational purposes. Bridge 808, erected by the mill operators and funded by Sussex County in 1917, has been incorporated into the state highway system and is being replaced by the Department of Transportation.

In and near the project area, three cultural resources were identified during preliminary assessment. First of these was the dam and its two associated bridge structures. The second resource was a house near the north end of the dam, which was occupied by the miller. Third was the physical remains of the mill itself. Together, all these sites represent a power system that was important in the history of Milton.

This investigation has demonstrated that the mill ruin no longer retains integrity sufficient to qualify it for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The miller's house and the buried remains of its predecessor lie outside the right-of-way and will not be affected by the project.

The dam, built in 1815 and periodically enlarged, retains considerable integrity. The 1917 combination waste gate and bridge, typical of a system common throughout Delaware, was found to be eligible for listing in the National Register. This system was recorded for the Historic American Engineering Record.

### *Purpose and location of the project*

In order to accomplish the rebuilding, it was necessary for the State of Delaware to obtain a permit from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers under Section 10 of the Rivers and Harbors Act of 1899 and Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344). The project was subject to review pursuant to Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

The entire project area, on both banks of the Broadkill, was included in the historical study. Limited archaeological test trenching was conducted on the south bank, in the vicinity of the mill and the penstock bridge.

### *Physical description of the project area*

Bridge 808 is part of a waste gate structure astride the concrete spillway to Wagamon's Pond. The original 1815 dam was built atop the causeway leading to Fergus' Bridge. Documented rebuildings in 1900 and 1917 changed the overall configuration very little.

The manmade water-control structure is about 700 feet long, consisting of a timber-cribbed earthen dam supplemented on the downstream side by considerable, recent, secondary filling. Thanks to the modern downstream filling, the apparent length of the dam today is only about sixty feet.

The original timber-cribbed earthen dam apparently lies under the western (southbound) lane of Mulberry Street, and is about ten feet wide at the top. The spillway crest is controlled by stop logs set in concrete structures under the bridge. The top of the dam is 8.6 feet above mean sea level, and the normal pool is 6.5 feet above mean sea level. The normal reservoir capacity is 153 acre-feet

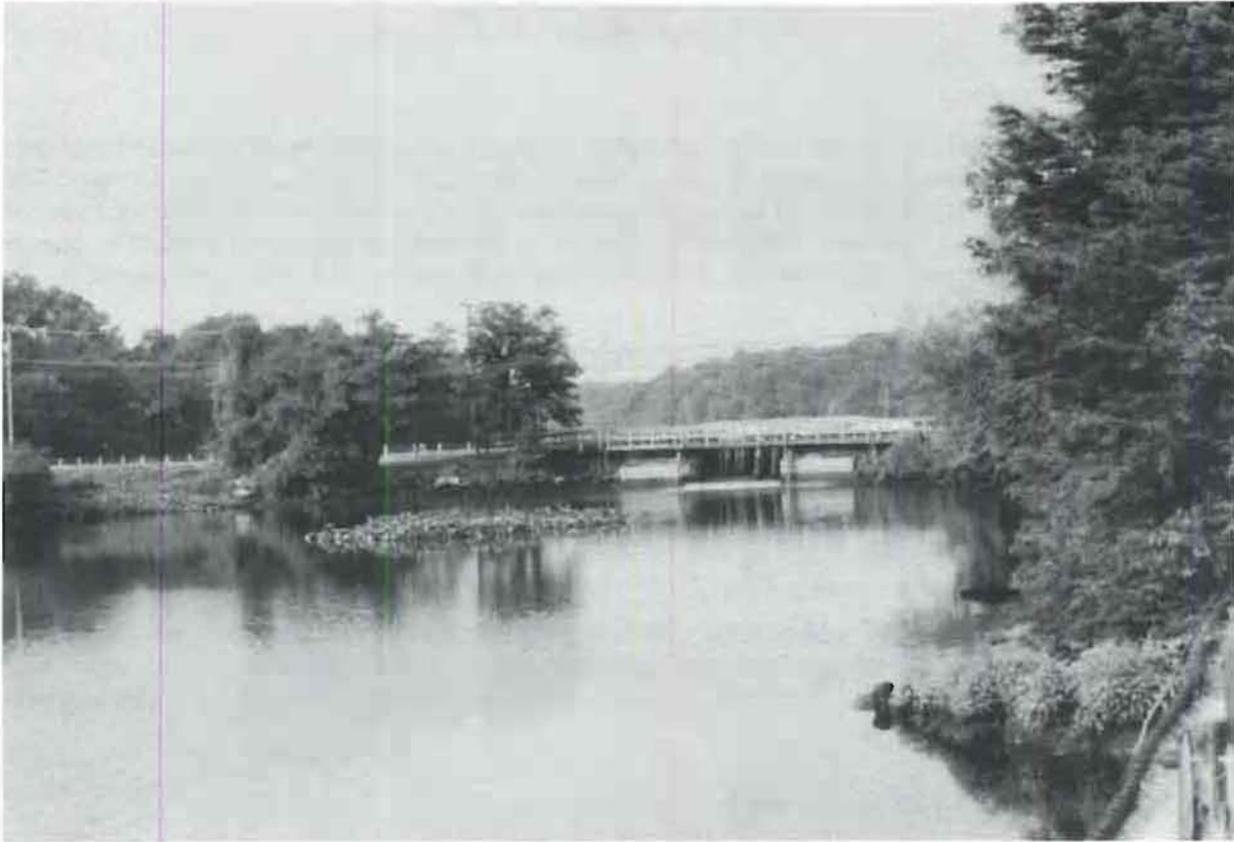


Plate 1: Bridge 808, looking west  
from the lower (Broad Street) bridge, 1990

Near the south end of the dam is a box culvert that contains the headrace of the former mill, which lay to the east. South of the dam is a large flat area, formerly the borrow pit from which material for the dam was removed. This flat area once contained the complex of warehouses and other auxiliary structures that supported the mill.

Between the two bridges, the swamp downstream from the dam has been filled up to the elevation of the roadway. In this area formerly stood two ice houses.

At the north end of the dam is a large area of filled ground, now occupied by a restaurant and its parking lot. The north end of the dam lies near a house at the southeast corner of Mulberry and Magnolia streets. At the south end of the dam, the hillside has been extensively mined for sand and gravel.

A similar bridge and waste gate system with similar arches, also part of the former Wagon water power system, still exists on the upper mill seat, called Diamond Pond, where County Road 319 crosses Long Bridge Branch. This pond formerly was called Wagon's upper pond, and always has been a part of this water-control system, even though it is not in the current project area.



Plate 2: Bridge 808, looking upstream toward the pond, showing concrete arch motif of the 1917 structure

### *Known cultural resources and previous research*

The concrete-slab bridge and control structure of the Wagamon's Pond waste gate has been recorded in the state cultural resource survey under CRS number S-4027.

In addition to the waste gate at Bridge 808, there is a penstock gate and box culvert bridge on the south end of the dam, near the superimposed ruins of at least three mills that successively occupied the site.

Published maps and historical descriptions contain references to houses, granaries, and other structures that have existed in and near the project area over the past two centuries. A major purpose of the current study was to locate and identify the sites of these well-known resources.

Immediately east of the project area is the Milton Historic District (S-1110), listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Milton is blessed with a body of professional historical research compiled by the late Harold B Hancock and by C. Russell McCabe of the Delaware Archives, from which much of the second chapter of this report is almost entirely derived.

While the area is known to have been populated during prehistoric times, there are no known prehistoric sites in the immediate vicinity, nor should any be expected, since most of the site consists of a dam constructed in 1815 and subsequently enlarged by filling. The remainder of the site is the borrow pit from which sand for building and repairing the dam was dug.

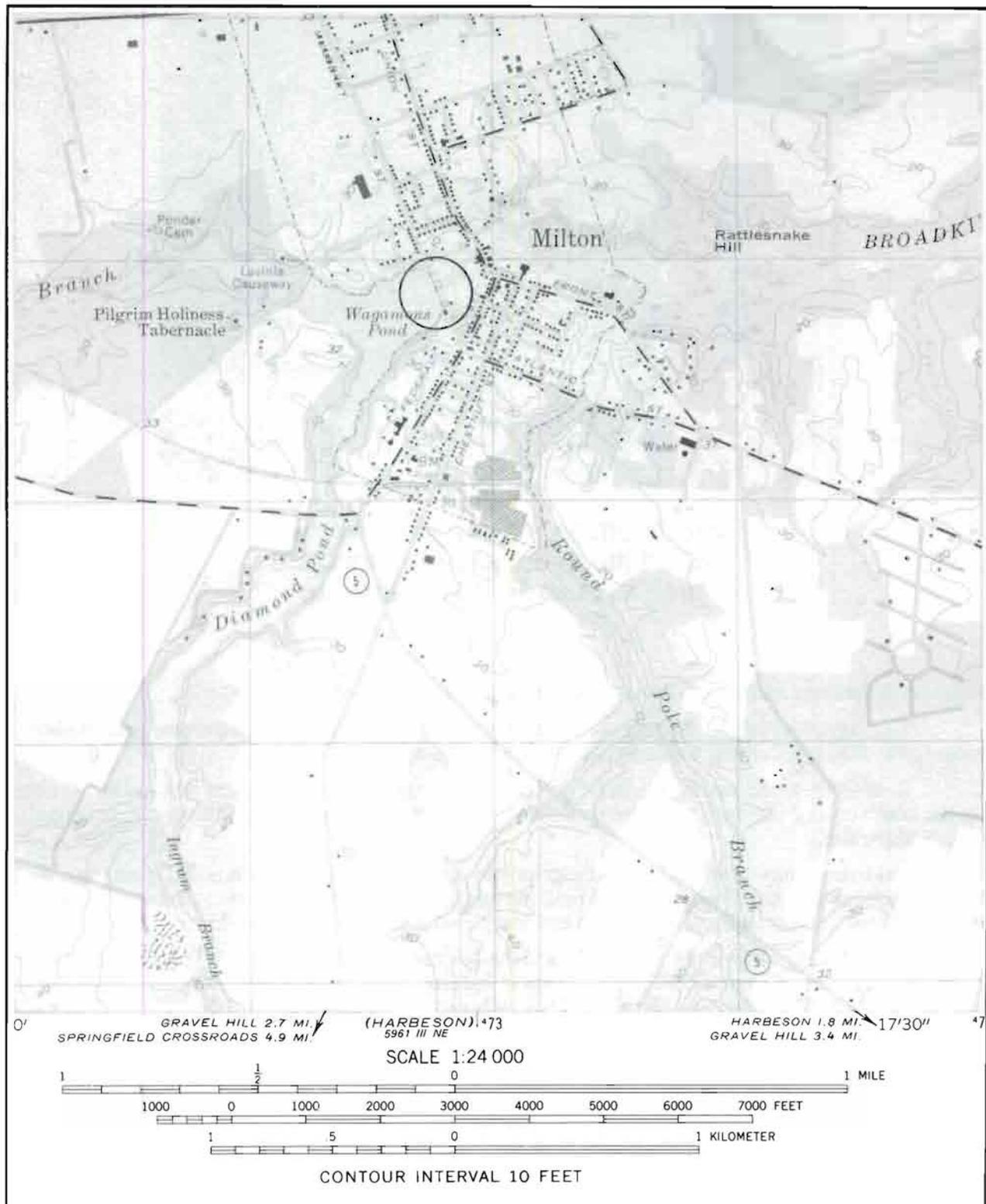


Figure 1: Site location, from USGS Milton 7.5 minute quadrangle

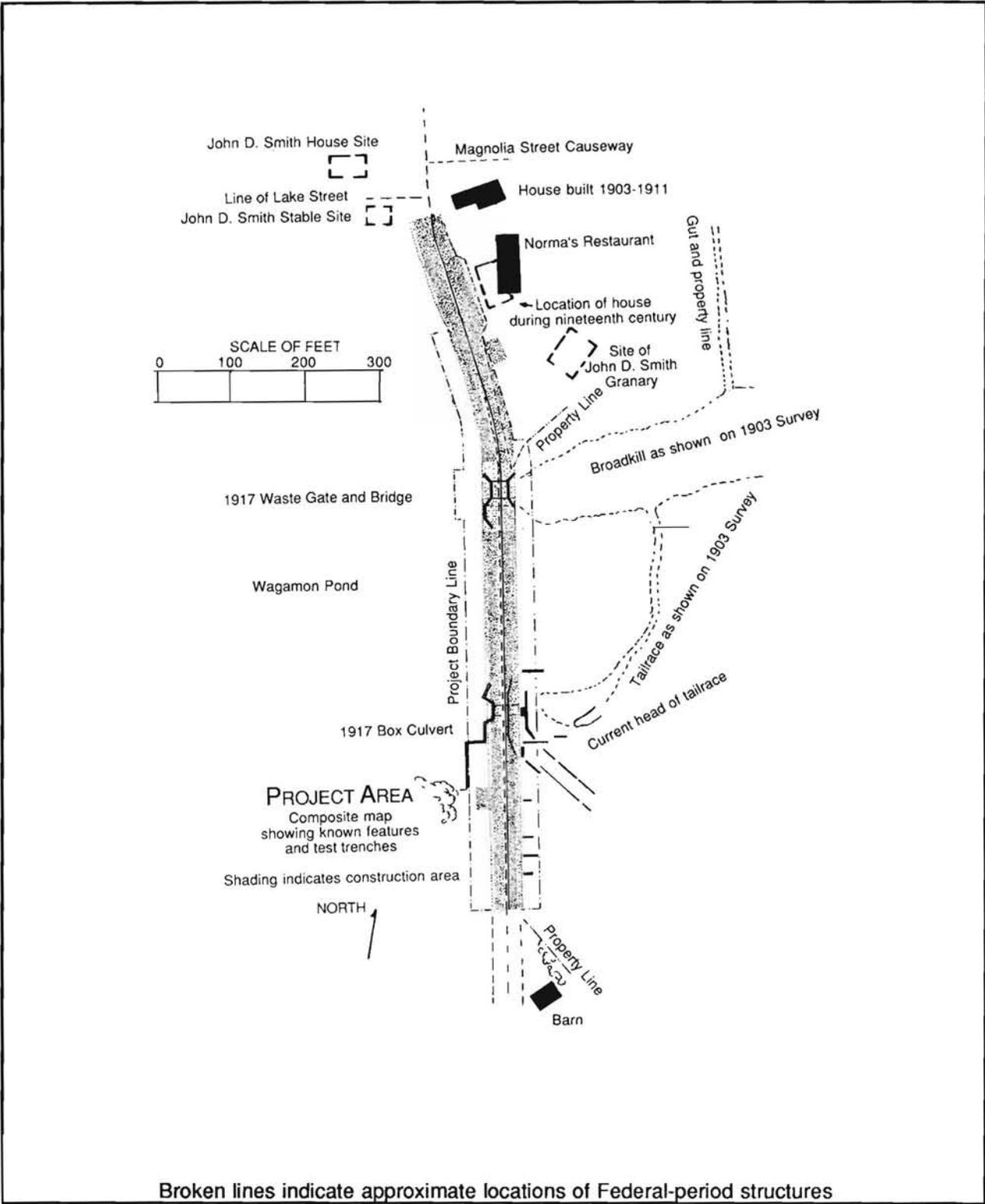


Figure 2: Orientation of historic maps and test trenches

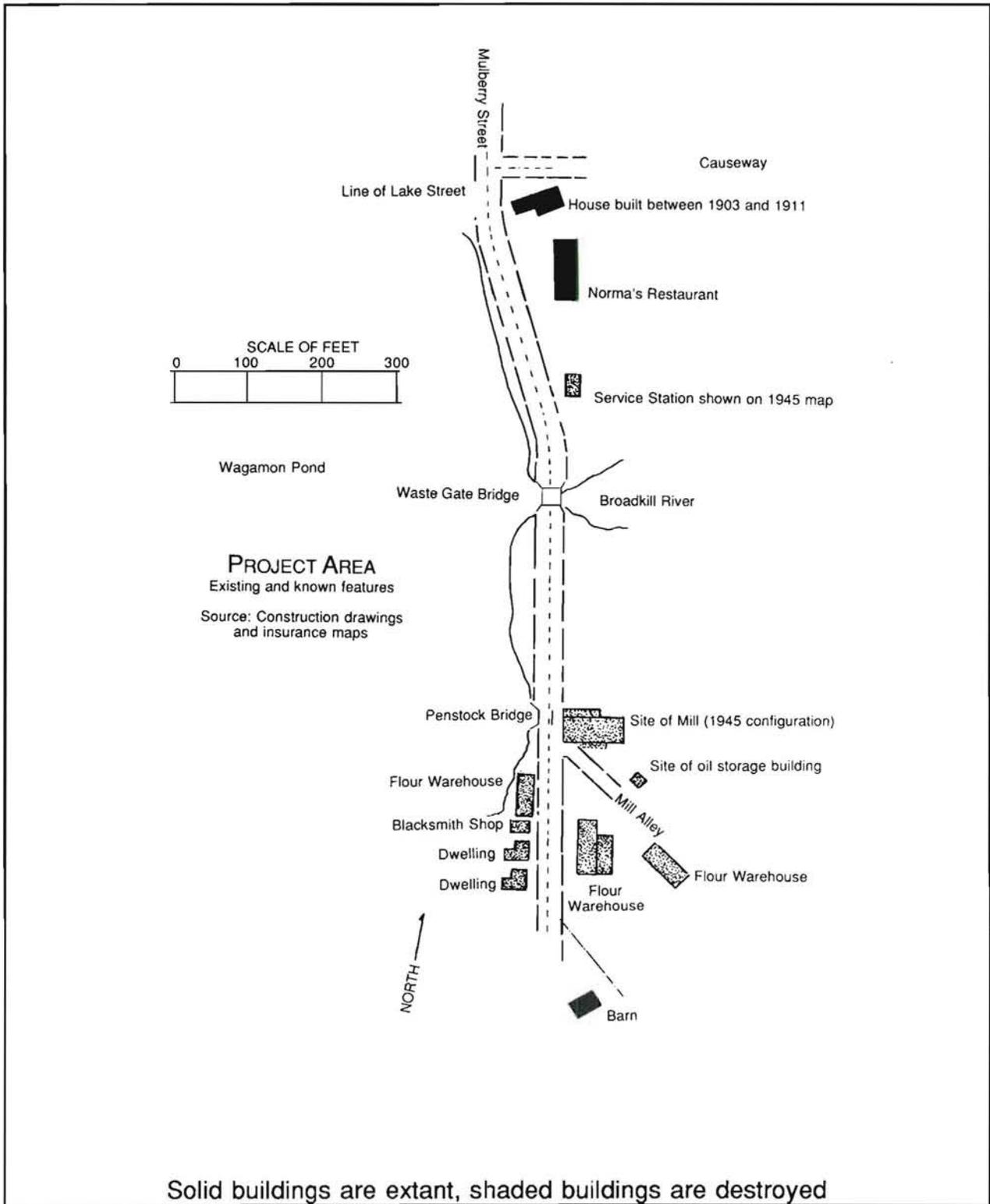


Figure 3: Existing and known features of the project area



Plate 3: Detail of John C. Hazzard's 1887 map,  
now in the town hall, Milton



Plate 4: View of Bridge 808,  
looking northeastward, 1990